

New homework policy this year

KRISTINA PALOMBA
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER

A few weeks ago one of the local news reporters called me to ask about the Shrewsbury Public Schools new Homework Policy. She wanted to know what started the district down this road. I realized I wasn't so sure. It had been two years in the making. I was familiar with the process, but how it all began was lost to me. This was the first question I asked Dr. Bent as I prepared to write this article. Why? How did the district become focused on this issue? It seems the answer can be found in a letter that he received from a parent who questioned homework. What is its purpose? What is the time commitment? Where do outside projects and reading fit? Does a parent help or not?

Dr. Bent took these questions to his school leadership team (SLT) and quickly realized from the lively discussion that he had touched on something very basic and important to the leaders of the district. There was more to it than one parent asking some questions. Further exploration of the topic led to the formation of a Homework Committee composed of

K-8 staff led by former Floral principal Ellen Kelly Fairbanks, Coolidge principal Marge Clark and Middle School assistant principal Joan Barry. This group of staff from across the district met for two years. They asked their own questions in surveys filled out by parents, staff and students. They poured over the written comments generated by the surveys and looked to the academic research for more answers. They then began to crunch data, incorporate the suggestions on surveys, utilize the current literature and integrate the practical experience of their own teaching to formulate guidelines for homework. These guidelines were shared with faculty, Coordinating Council, DLT and PTO's. Dr. Bent, Ms Kelly Fairbanks, Deborah Peeples, and I polished a final document in the school committee subcommittee on policy. The product is a culmination of what we all hope is a strong statement about homework in Shrewsbury.

The resultant policy goes far to give answers to the questions raised in the parent's letter of 1999 as well as many more that followed. It has attempted to blend all the concerns and suggestions of the students, teachers and

staff in a clear statement. It provides nightly time guidelines for each grade level. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for students, parents, teachers and administration. The opening statement addresses the connection of our district mission statement to the value of homework. It is a comprehensive work of an inclusive process. The policy will be published in student and parent handbooks and can also be obtained at the central office of the school district. It can also be found online at <http://www.ci.shrewsbury.ma.us/Sps/Schools/Central/Policy/500.EducationalProgram/homework.pdf>

We begin this fall to try our new policy and hope that parents, staff, and students will communicate openly on the issue. Sessions will be held on the topic of homework and will cover topics such as expectations and modeling examples for parents. We also hope that a pamphlet for parents will be produced to give clear examples and help for frequent questions.

Finally, a review at the end of the year should result in the successful, model policy that we intend it to be for all those involved with homework in the district.

Middle School West construction to begin

DANIEL MORGADO
TOWN MANAGER

The work of the High School/Middle School Building Committee is about to enter its second phase with the start of the renovation of the existing high school into a middle school configuration. When the existing high school re-opens as a middle school in September of 2004, the building will have undergone an extensive remodeling, including the replacement of most mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems. Equally important will be the interior reconfiguration of the building which will allow the facility to re-open better able to serve the unique programmatic needs of our expanding middle school population.

The budget for the renovation and retrofit will be \$22 Million, and 64% of the costs for this project will be subject to reimbursement by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The construction schedule for the Middle School - West Project will run from October 2002 to April of 2004, which is a much more relaxed schedule than the 12 month schedule originally envisioned. In light of the amount of work involved in this renovation, the Building Committee determined that an 18-month construction schedule was much more realistic. The expanded schedule allows for all of the work to be completed when the building is not occupied.

The Building Committee also continues to work on the finishing and fitting out of the new high school in preparation for the first day of school on September 3rd. The building is coming together nicely and we expect our residents to be most pleased with the results.

This new facility will serve this community outstandingly for many years. It is the symbolic capstone of the excellent educational experience we provide our young people through the efforts of teachers, administrators, parents, and students, together with the support and generosity of the citizens of Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury Public Schools' notice of non-discrimination

Shrewsbury Public Schools are required by the Massachusetts Department of Education to publish an annual statement of non-discrimination. This notice serves to meet that requirement.

The Massachusetts Equal Educational Opportunity statute, General Laws Chapter 76, & 5, ensures that all students have the right to equal educational opportunities in the public schools. The Shrewsbury Public School District is committed to ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.

The Shrewsbury Public Schools are in compliance with all state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment.

The complete Statement of Non-discrimination can be obtained by contacting Superintendent's Office of the Shrewsbury School Department at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545 or by calling 508-841-8400 to request a copy.

District welcomes new staff members

TOM KENNEDY
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Students will have an opportunity to visit their school building prior to the September 3, first day of school. Through the efforts of the various parent organizations and the school principals, each school has provided a schedule for students to visit the school and receive a tour. This is especially helpful for students who are new to a particular school. As these tours are prior to the start of the school year, teachers are not scheduled to be present. There will be a Curriculum Night in September where parents will have an opportunity to meet their child's teacher.

See page 2 for student tour schedules.

The teacher selection process in Shrewsbury is rigorous. The process includes interviews with principals, department directors, coordinators, teachers, parents and central office administrators. Administrative positions include a site visit to the school/district of the candidate as well.

All teaching positions also require a demonstration lesson in the classroom. Following the demonstration lesson the students in the classroom are provided an opportunity to provide feedback to the principal or department director. Our new hires represent staff associated with the continued enrollment growth in Shrewsbury as well as replacement teachers for staff that have retired, resigned, or are on a leave of absence. The new staff represents a blend of experienced educators as well as recent graduates who are beginning their careers. Among the new hires are several individuals who worked in the district last year as either long-term substitutes, instructional aides or substitute teachers. We also have several new teachers who are entering teaching after having had successful careers in business and industry. Our new hires received their Bachelor's Degree from 37 colleges/universities. In addition, over one-half of these individuals are entering the district with a Master's Degree or above.

At press time we have confirmed the hiring of the following 47 individuals. We welcome the following new staff.

HIGH SCHOOL

Jennifer Gibson, English, B.A. English, Mount Holyoke College.
Thomas Hardy, Science, B.S. Chemistry, Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL
Paul Harmon, English, B.A. English Literature, Framingham State College.
Pamela Johnson, School Nurse, B.S.

Nursing, Southeastern Massachusetts University.

Nancy Lowery, Mathematics, B.S. Chemical Engineering, University of Washington.

Christina MacDonald, English, B.A. English Literature, Boston University; M.A. English, Acadia University, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Jennifer Peloquin, Science, B.A. History, University of Massachusetts-Amherst; M.Ed. University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Carolyn Sherman, Special Education, B.S. Psychology, Worcester State College; M. Ed. Assumption College.

Andrew Smith, Social Studies, B.S. History, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Allyn Taylor, Science, B.S. Biochemistry, University of Maine.

Jammie Zona, Guidance, B.A. Social Work, Providence College; M.A. Counseling, Assumption College.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Catherine Burgholzer, Health, B.S. Health/Physical Education, Westfield State College; M.S. Health Education, Worcester State College.

Alison Cordeiro, Health, B.S. Health Education, Worcester State College.

Susan Hirsh, Special Education, B.S. Special Education/Elementary Education, Fitchburg State College; M.Ed. Framingham State College.

Timothy Kewriga, Social Studies Grade 8, B.A. History, Assumption College.

David Lajoie, Health/PE, B.S. Physical Education, Bridgewater State College.

Stephen Lobban, Principal, B.S. Education, Westfield State College; M.Ed. Westfield State College; Doctorate of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Derek Pizzuto, Language Arts/Social Studies (2001/02), B.A. English Literature, University of California; M. Ed. Framingham State College.

Nathalie Scott, French/Latin, B.A. Political Science and International Relations, Universite Libre De Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium.

Amy Turner, Latin, B.A. Classics, Bowdoin College.

Leslie Wortzman, School Adjustment Counselor (2001/02), B.A. Sociology, Boston University; M.S.W. University of South Carolina.

BEAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Deborah Bonneau, Music, Bachelor of Music, Boston University.

Allison Menovich, School Psychologist, B.A. Psychology, Brandeis University; M.Ed. University of Massachusetts-Boston; C.A.G.S.

University of Massachusetts-Boston.

COOLIDGE

Stephanie Smith, Grade 5, B.A., Spanish, University of Massachusetts-Amherst; M.Ed.,

New Staff, see page 6

Staff retirements

A number of staff members retired this past school year. It is important to recognize each of these individuals for their commitment and dedication to the children of Shrewsbury. The entire community wishes a happy and healthy retirement to all our retirees.

Administration

Mrs. Maryjo Moon, Principal Shrewsbury Middle School, 25 years of service to the district.

Dr. Betty Jane (BJ) Lates, Principal Spring Street School, four years of service to Shrewsbury.

Coolidge School

Ms. Joan Trainor, Reading Specialist and District-Wide Title One Director, retired with 24 years of service.

Floral Street

Mr. John McDonald, Grade 5 Teacher, retired after 31 years of service to Shrewsbury.

Ms. Alma Shanley, School Nurse, retired with 15 years of service in the district.

High School

Ms. Patricia Galipeau, Guidance Counselor, retired after 25 years of service to Shrewsbury.

Mr. Jack McGinn, Science Teacher, retired after 30 years in the district.

Ms. Hazel Schroder, Science Teacher, retired after 17 years of service in Shrewsbury.

Paton School

Mrs. Merna Siff, Media Specialist retired after serving the district for 25 years.

Mrs. Theresa Haire and Mrs. Ann Paquette both retired after having worked for the district for the past 34 years as general aides.